

I don't know where this band came from! I mean, obviously they are from Calgary, which I was basically ignoring because I had no idea Alberta was becoming a breeding ground for fast, heavy hardcore with smart ideas, but all of a sudden, every single one of my friends in every single little city across Canada (except mine) were being fucking destroyed (in a good way) by XRAPEXREVENGE's blend of radical violent feminist politics and sick, heavy riffs. I took the trip to see them in a shed in Halifax and had my face blown off in a set of, oh, say, eight minutes? I sat down with them to figure why I love this band so much while being so neutral about all their influences. Dillinger Escape Plan? Really?

Interview and intro
by Juls Generic

Photos by Trista Kroft

rape revenge

MRR: Can you introduce yourselves and say what you do in the band?

Gwen: I'm Gwen, I play bass.

Arielle: I'm Arielle and I play guitar.

Samantha: I'm Samantha, I do vocals.

Keaton: I'm Keaton and I play guitar.

Matt: I'm Matt and I play drums.

MRR: Can you guys fill me in on a bit of the history of the band?

Samantha: So Matt and I formed Rape Revenge in August of 2009. We wanted to start an in-your-face feminist, heavy, angry hardcore band. We asked our friends Keaton and Gwen to join shortly after. We had a different drummer and Matt was originally on guitar and then the drummer was kicked out of the band, and Matt started playing on drums and Arielle then joined the band in September.

Arielle: November.

Samantha: It was after October because October was our first show.

MRR: Woah, why did you kick the drummer out? Drama?

Matt: It was almost kind of like a miscommunication.

Samantha: I started the band because I wanted to go on tour and I wanted to put out records and I wanted to do shit. He just, like, cancelled a lot of practices and maybe had a different idea about how serious the band was. He was a really great drummer and a really great guy and he wanted to move to Vancouver so there was this time line about how far we could go with him.

MRR: Oh that makes sense. So how long are you guys on tour for?

Samantha: What day is it? May 15th? We've been on tour for like 15 days and we get home June 1st.

MRR: You're in Halifax right now, you've come to basically one edge of the country and now you're turning around and going back to the other edge. That's fucking crazy. This country is super big, the gas prices are crazy, how are you doing and what's the longest drive that you've done?

Samantha: Our tour is going so well. We're getting fed really good food at every show, we're getting paid pretty well, the promoters are doing amazing jobs, we all put in \$200 dollars out of our pockets in the gas fund as a back-up fund, and we haven't touched it yet so... Oh, I think our longest drive is 22 hours. We didn't plan it, you always try to get shows in between, but it doesn't always work.

MRR: I guess the drive between Toronto and Thunder Bay is pretty crazy.

S: Yeah, that fucking Canadian Shield.

Keaton: That 22-hour drive is straight from Ottawa to Winnipeg, what's in between there?

MRR: So when your record came to my house, my roommate saw it and was like, "Holy fuck, this is so fucking '90s." I kind of agree with like the aesthetic and the overt feminist politics at the same time, I think a lot of punks across Canada are really into seeing you on this tour. Maybe it's because you guys are the first band after the winter to do a full cross-Canada tour, so people are especially excited, but I think a lot of people are stoked on the in-your-face feminism thing, almost relieved, especially combined with being straight edge. Where are you guys



coming from? What are your influences in the past and present?

Keaton: I guess the aesthetics of the record, like the manila envelope record sleeve. I guess we just wanted to make a record that looks like records that we really like and a lot of them were recorded and released in the '90s.

MRR: From Calgary, or?

Keaton: No, from everywhere. For me, it's like bands on Gravity or Ebullition, screamo type bands, that have handmade do-it-yourself records.

Samantha: Some records that we looked at, we looked at Indian Summer, which one was the one that was also an envelope?

Keaton: Channel.

MRR: I've never heard of these bands!

Keaton: They're like, emo bands from the '90s. Also, there was a Submission Hold record that we looked at.

Samantha: They're my favorite band. I brought this seven inch down and I was like, "I want it to look like this," and we all agreed it was sweet.

Matt: Charles Bronson also had the envelope record.

Samantha: We also just, like, figured it was cheaper. I don't know if it actually was. But we had some envelopes and we had a paper cutter, so...

MRR: What about the screen-printed of like, wolf girls poking at a bunny with sticks? I heard you did that, Gwen?

Gwen: That was an outline of a drawing that I did a couple of years ago that Samantha saw and liked, and asked if we could use it as the album art. I think the image can be interpreted differently for different people. For me, it's not necessarily meant to be a dark or disturbing image at all, although I think some people think it is... to me, it's more about the innocence of childhood and the curiosity of death. Although the image wasn't initially made for Rape Revenge, it seems to work well for our album cover art.

MRR: What bands right now are getting you excited? Like why did you start this band? Do you know what I mean? You guys obviously have to have seen a power violence band or heard one, and you mentioned before that you all write the songs, so something must have inspired you or led you to sound this way.

S: I was extremely influenced by Think Don't Pray. Seeing that band changed who I am and changed how I was a feminist. I was a feminist before that band, it changed how polite I was about it (laughs). Their songs were short, their singer was crazy and spoke so much in between songs, and that's my main influence for this band. Which is interesting because Matt was in that band.

Matt: Yep!

Arielle: I dunno... I don't know any modern bands that I'm stoked on.

MRR: Dude, you are like The Shaggs of power violence. You just play like brutal complex riffs, but you're all like, "huh? What is this?" And you play that hilarious hollow body guitar that is like the size of you. Can you tell us about your guitar?

Arielle: Umm, it's a semi hollow body. I dunno, it's black, it's nice, I love it and it's sweet and badass, it's the best guitar I've ever had.

Keaton: Arielle is really into music from the '60s.

Samantha: She loves the Beatles, they're like her favorite band.

Matt: Which might explain why she plays a hollow body guitar.

Arielle: Yeah, I really, really, really, really, really, really like The Beatles. I have so much paraphernalia, I have like every record on vinyl, I have every Beatles 45 that was ever came out, I have, like, collectable buttons and trading cards, everything. Really, really, really nerdy like.

MRR: That's fucking crazy.

Arielle: I also really like the Cramps, and I love their guitarist Poison Ivy and she's so hot and she plays a hollow body, so that might be why I originally got that guitar...

Keaton: But you don't see a lot of hollow body guitars in hardcore music.

Samantha: I think it's like, we formed this band because we're friends and because we like each other, and I wanted to hang out with Keaton and Gwen and I didn't know them very well, so I was like, why don't we ask them to join the band? We didn't form this band because we were all in bands that sounded exactly like this band already, there was no recycling going on, and I think that's maybe why we don't have this clear influence too...

Keaton: One thing. Oh, sorry Samantha.

Samantha: No, go a head.

Keaton: I dunno, one thing I want to mention is that the first five songs of this band, Matt and Samantha wrote together back when Matt played guitar and I think that the way those songs are and the way that they were written have a lot to do with how the guitar riffs are still written. You know? Like, I really like those songs...

MRR: So you just continued to write songs that sound like that?

Keaton: Yeah, exactly. And we've progressed and added different stuff. Like I really wanted to add a noisy/chaotic element to the songs or like, weird chords with open strings that people have described as sounding really crappy but really good at the same time.

Samantha: Yeah, when Matt and I wrote those first songs, it was super collaborative. We would find a few notes or bar chords, I think they were all bar chords.

Matt: Uh-huh.

Samantha: And we would be like, "how can we make this song more fucked up?" We were both really stoked on Dillinger Escape Plan at the time and we'd be like, let's make this part sound like Dillinger Escape Plan, we'll play this part really fast and weird, and then move on. And that was how we approached writing our first songs.

Matt: I've heard people make the criticism that our songs "aren't fast enough," or "aren't slow enough," and I think they don't understand where we are coming from.

Samantha: It's also really weird to write lyrics over it, 'cause it's like "shit, this is fucking strange," and "where do I fit into it?" It's become this huge challenge and I've worked harder in Rape Revenge than I have in any other band.



MRR: What kind of bands are you playing with in Calgary, it being a small city and all? Mostly other fast bands or mostly other "girl" bands?

Samantha: We play with Lab Rat a lot. They are our friends and Matt is in that band and they're all vegan and feminist.

Arielle: And they're fast...

Samantha: Yes, so fast. And we also play with...

Arielle: Kali is from Red Deer and I'm not sure how you would describe it...

S: They're very... extremely Trash Talk worship, and a little like Drop Dead.

Matt: They have the best drummer.

Samantha: He's amazing.

Keaton: Kali is one band in Alberta where, because they don't tour or anything, a lot of people outside Alberta don't know about them and it makes them like Alberta's best-kept secret.

Arielle: For sure.

Samantha: They're so amazing, all vegetarian, all very friendly.

Arielle: And then there's Jeff Spicoli. But they're from Edmonton and the cool part about Alberta is that, like, if you're a fast hardcore band...

Samantha: In Alberta, if you're a fast hardcore band, we all know each other and all play together.

Arielle: We play with Point Break too.

Keaton: Yeah, Point Break is a friend of ours.

Samantha: But all these bands are all dude bands. We like to play with bands like Brain Fever.

Keaton: There's a band called Brain Fever, they're like an emotive hardcore band.

Samantha: Very '90s.

Keaton: I think the members of that band intended on starting a band and that sounds like Ground, but they kind of turned out really different and they're...

It's this super group of... uh... they sound kind of like Carol takes The Square, they're really good.

Samantha: Who else do we play with that's all women?

Keaton: There was like band for a while called Blamas that had this woman, Noelle, in it. She was amazing.

Samantha: She played bass and did vocals.

Keaton: They were kind of a really chaotic band, they always get drunk...

Samantha: Don't even play their songs.

Keaton: Yeah, they would just play like Dystopia covers.

Arielle: Or Refused covers...

Samantha: We also play with a wonderful woman called Laurelei and she does solo ukelele stuff. I just had her play a few shows that we've played, because I love her and think she's the most talented songwriter in Canada. She's the best.

Keaton: She's actually the reason why I started playing music or have anything to do with music.

Samantha: She was in a band called the Contaminant C and she was also in a band called Sheshells and she was in a band called Boys Kissing Boys. Oh, and we should talk about the gender role thing.

Keaton: Juls hasn't asked that question yet.

MRR: Right, yeah. So what initially struck me about this band is that there's not conventional gender roles happening, and it's almost 50/50 dudes and girls, which is pretty uncommon in hardcore... and a female guitar player, which is also really not very common. Like, when you say that Lab Rat is feminist band, the first thing that comes to my mind is, "If you're a feminist band, why don't you have girls



in the band?" It just seems like a crucial point to me, like there are so many all-male units in hardcore that dominate hardcore so much. And then on the flip side, there are a number of bands that have just a lady singer with overt feminist lyrics, but I'm always thinking, "if you believe so strongly in feminism, why don't you trust girls to play instruments in your band? Why don't you play music with girls?" Ummm... was this a question? Do you guys have any comments on this? Ladies, was it hard for you to get into playing bands? Dudes, did you always play music with girls and if not, umm...

Samantha: Well, for one, Lab Rat originally did have a female member, and when she left the band, they found Johnny, and he's just so great, and I remember Matt being like, "Aw this sucks, we're just another all-dude band."

Matt: Yeah, we had Maria, who played bass and we did a West Coast mini tour with her and it was rad, but then she left. Originally, I wanted Lab Rat to be more like this band, like a mix of sexes, and we also asked Noelle who is in Hamas, but it just didn't work out.

Keaton: One thing that happens in Calgary that we've talked

Arielle: I have another band called The Throwaways, pop-punk/power-pop band, with my two best friends. We've been playing for like two years now and just came out with a split seven-inch. I dunno, we were just like, we play instruments, let's play together! Actually, me and Jesse were like, we play bass and guitar, let's make our friend Warren play drums. I dunno, it never really occurred to me, I just always played music with girls.

Samantha: I used to play in an indie band and we didn't have a bassist and I was like "let's get a girl, I'm tired of this boy's club." When I played in a band that was all male, it was shitty.

MRR: Yeah, I don't like that situation at all. Like if you're on tour and you get arrested, you'd have to be in a jail cell all by yourself.

Samantha: Yeah!

MRR: And then when you stop at a gas station, and you have to go to the bathroom by yourself and you can still hear everyone laughing and joking around from the boys' bathroom.

Keaton: Yeah, I think the swimming pool change room has been one of the defining experiences for me on this tour. We went swimming at the YMCA.

Arielle: I was swimming laps and some girl kicked me in the head and I had to stop swimming laps!

Samantha: Wait, why was it a defining experience for you?

MRR: Because most of your band couldn't hang out with you?

Keaton: Yeah, it was just me and Matt. We used to work together at an organic food store and we never really get to hang out, yeah, the change room.

Samantha: That's why being on tour is so sweet, because we're all so busy and never really get to hang out.

Arielle: Now you can't get away from me!

MRR: What's it gonna be like when you tour with Asshole Parade? I saw that they asked you to join them on a west-coast tour on your Myspace page.

(band laughs)

Samantha: They're gonna be like, getting high and we'll be like, maybe drinking slurpees.

Arielle: And then we're all gonna wear giant, giant t-shirts with giant marijuana leaves on them.

Samantha: They're such a huge band, it's so weird that they asked us, I don't know if it's serious. I dunno, we'll see, I'm gonna see.

MRR: So you're gonna follow-up on that?

Samantha: It's just, I'd really like to tour with bands with women in it though. I like touring with Lab Rat so much, but it's like, sometimes we're like "that women band that's touring with Lab Rat" but sometimes it's like they're "that all-dude band touring with Rape Revenge." I dunno, I wish we could just tour with Punch. [Laughs]

Keaton: I dunno, if we tour with Asshole Parade, we can write books about it and that's how we'll make our fortune.

MRR: But you'll probably meet other girl bands along the way.

Samantha: Or Margaret Thrasher will re-form and go with us...

MRR: Okay, next question! The song "I'm not your Fucking Mother" is about getting exhausted with explaining about the nuances of sexism to the men in your community. I guess this is perpetuating that because I want you to explain examples that are bummin' you out. Like shit that might be subtle to other people but totally in-your-face bullshit to you.

Arielle: Well, I don't want to shit-talk bands, well, whatever, there's this band in Calgary, they don't even play this song anymore, it was called "Bromance" and all the dudes would get so fucking stoked because



about on this tour is that there's a lot of bands that recycle the same members over and over

and the same people are in three or four bands and it's hard for them to be in bands outside of that that might want to tour.

Samantha: That's why I think asking people who have never been in bands before to be in bands is really important. I was asked to be in a crust punk band and I had to learn to play bass to be in that band and my life changed because of that. So it's good to give people that opportunity. And sometimes you can't and that's okay. Like, Lab Rat, they're a unique band, they're all vegan and they are all really feminist men and they really step up about that.

Keaton: Yeah, they talk about gender roles and gender violence and call people out on that.

Matt: And I think that can be effective too, being men addressing other men about gender violence.

Keaton: In Calgary, there are a lot of women in bands though. When I started going to shows, there was this band called The Constant C and that band was two guys and three girls. And then a woman from that band, Laura, who we mentioned earlier, would write songs and get her friends to play them. I was in that band, playing her songs.

MRR: Who brings the songs to the jams in this band?

Samantha: We write them together. I write the lyrics.

Keaton: This is the first band that I've been in where the songs are written together, at jams. I mean, someone might come with a riff, but I don't think that's really happened yet. Except those original five songs...

Samantha: But those were written collaboratively between me and Matt.

Keaton: Yeah.

MRR: That's cool.

Samantha: Yeah, it's really interesting, because there are people who don't play guitar being like, "Try this, put your hand over here, play in this weird way."

it's like "Aw yeah, hardcore shows are all about this male bonding," and blah blah blah and the chorus was like "This isn't romance, we call it bromance!" and all the dudes would get up with the singer and sing along. And it was always like, "Oh, this song. Okay. We're at a hardcore show, it's 90 per cent dudes and now there's like a song honoring how sweet that is and I can't sing along." Like I'd be stoked for the entire set and then stand there and not enjoy it. It was really weird and I like, mentioned it to some of my friends. I was like "I dunno, I think it's kind of fucked up that they have a song that's rubbing all this in my face," and they were like "You're being too sensitive, it's just a song."

MRR: But imagine if you had a song that was like "We're white people! We're hanging out! We're all white punks! Yeah!"

Arielle: Yeah! They didn't get it *at all*. They were like, "You're over-thinking it, you're over-sensitive..." But it seems that in Calgary people are pretty apathetic about it. I guess I failed on that one.

Samantha: But you didn't fail, they failed on not listening to you, and in the end it's not your fucking obligation to teach them how to not be assholes.

Arielle: Exactly. It's not my job to explain all this shit to people, like ughhh. You're being an asshole, you're saying you're a feminist and then making it a boy's club and I don't feel like I should have to tell them, they should be calling themselves out on their shit. But they're too apathetic to even be thinking about their lyrics or being conscious of what they're putting out there and being conscious of making shows or bands or whatever more accessible.

MRR: Sam, you were earlier talking about how you hate when you meet people and they talk about how they hate Calgary, can you tell us why we shouldn't hate Calgary? And what Calgary is, since I'm sure most of the MRR readership doesn't know.

Samantha: Calgary is a town like any other town where the people in it can make a choice to see it as shitty or good! I really think anyone can make that choice, no matter where you are. You're given situations and a backdrop and it's up to you what you do with it.

MRR: But what is it! What is it!

Arielle: Calgary is in Alberta in western Canada. I dunno, it has like a million people in it. It's a really oil-rich city. Our town's sign has a cowboy hat on it. We are known for the Calgary Stampede which is a shitty cultural event that takes place every summer that just fucking treats animals like shit and is an excuse for people to get drunk in the streets.

Samantha: Actually the domestic violence and sexual violence rate in Calgary is at its peak, it like quadruples during the Calgary Stampede. It is the worst time to be a woman in Calgary. We have a song called "Shank a Cowboy" about how much the Stampede sucks.

MRR: So what's good about it?

Samantha: We have so many all-ages venues in Calgary right now!

Gwen: The all-ages scene is booming. It's awesome.

MRR: Woah, cool! What kind of venues are they? Like places punk started up, or...?

Samantha: Yeah.

MRR: Really? And there's more than one?

K: Yeah, there are five all-ages venues in Calgary right now. One is called The New Black Centre, one is called Local Library, which is not really a venue, but a workshop space that a church gave some kids, there's a hotdog stand that has shows.

Arielle: For free!

Keaton: And they were doing all-ages shows for like a year when there

was no other place to do shows, not even a house. And then Gwen and I are involved in a venue that started this year called Comrade Sound. It's a really small venue run by a small handful of people. We have workshops and shows about twice or three times a week, lots of touring bands. We try to have young bands play our shows, bands from high school or even junior high. There aren't a lot of shows for those bands to play in Calgary that aren't marketed as a competition.

Samantha: What are the other all-ages venues? You said five.

Keaton: There's a house called the Safe Spot, and a house called the Fun House.

Samantha: There's a lot of house shows, right before we left we played a show at the Dollhouse. In Calgary, people mosh a lot. Women mosh a lot! We all have so much and people participate very actively in our community, because it's easy to.

Keaton: The cool thing about Calgary is that there are like 40-50 bands!

MRR: What?!!

Samantha: Yeah, like punk bands, but other kinds too, lots of hardcore and indie and noise. There's a great noise scene here too!

Keaton: This year we had a really warm winter. And we had a super productive summer last year and it just didn't really stop. And we're looking to have another great summer!

Samantha: In the winter, I started putting on a lot of shows at the Dollhouse because nobody seemed to, because there were no touring bands. And I was like, "fuck! Why aren't we putting on shows?" And so we had shows in my living room a lot and in a laundromat over the winter. It was so rad.

MRR: Seriously?! I've always wanted to have a laundromat venue.

Keaton: Well, it wasn't so much a venue, we just went in there and played a show and then left.

MRR: Rad, like out of these automated laundromats?

Samantha: Yeah! And we played a parking lot recently. We have a lot of guerrilla shows.



which is funny because there's so many places where we *are* welcome, and we're still like, *let's go where we're not welcome!* But it's so much fun. We also have a lot of zines out of here and I have a zine library.

Arielle: And they've started having way more shows in Edmonton and Red Deer. These cities are all only a few hours apart and everyone travels a lot to the different towns, it's really fun!

Samantha: People are always like, "Calgary sucks, why do you live there?" But they don't ask us any questions about what's going on there. It's really important not to let mainstream culture define a city for us. When people think of Calgary, they think of oil and the Stampede, or all that stuff, but you can guarantee that if there's something fucked up in a city, there are people there mad about it who are trying to create an alternative to it.

vape revenge